



Side Event
on the margins of the
58th session of the United Nations Commission on Population and Development
7-14 April 2025

Ensuring Healthy Ageing for All: Challenges and Opportunities in an Ageing World

7 April 2025, 13:15 to 14:30 p.m.
Conference Room 9, UN Headquarters, New York
[Watch Live: UN Web TV](#)

Background

Our world is ageing fast. By 2025 one in six people will be an older person. In light of this reality, ensuring healthy ageing for all has become a critical priority. Healthy ageing is a life-long process of maintaining physical, mental, and social well-being. It requires a life-course approach, integrating preventive healthcare, active lifestyles, social inclusion, and policy support to enable individuals to age with dignity and fulfillment.

Several global frameworks have addressed healthy ageing, most notably the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and the Political Declaration adopted in 2002, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and, most recently, the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021-2030). These frameworks emphasize several key priority areas including universal and equal access to healthcare services, ensuring the responsiveness of the health sector to older persons physical and mental health needs, enabling older persons to age in place through supportive environments, providing access to long-term care and support services when needed, and combatting ageism.

Despite growing awareness and Governmental and societal efforts, several challenges hinder the achievement of healthy ageing for all. Limited access to adequate and affordable healthcare, particularly

in low-income communities, threatens the well-being of all, including older persons. Economic barriers, such as inadequate pension systems and financial insecurity, make it difficult for many to afford necessary healthcare and support services, especially given the increasing burden of non-communicable diseases. Societal ageism and stigma continue to negatively impact the various aspects of older persons' lives, leading to their social exclusion. Additionally, migration, urbanization, and changing family structures and cultural norms contribute to the weakening of familial and community support for ageing populations, further placing greater burdens on family members while also increasing pressure on the underdeveloped care economy in many countries. Furthermore, while technological advancements hold promise for promoting healthy ageing, they remain inaccessible to many due to digital illiteracy and affordability issues. Finally, humanitarian crises, including conflict and natural disasters, sometimes combined, continue to threaten the lives and well-being of many older persons.

The right to health is recognized in most core international human rights treaties, with specific provisions addressing older persons. While international human rights law acknowledges that the right to the highest attainable standard of health is subject to progressive realization, Governments are still obligated to use their maximum available resources to achieve it. Healthy ageing is a shared responsibility that requires cross-sectoral collaboration among all relevant stakeholders, including older persons themselves, civil society, and the private sector. However, in many cases, siloed approaches persist. Bold policy reforms, improved resource allocation, and community-driven solutions that change the narrative on ageing and prioritize the well-being of older persons are urgently needed to ensure healthy ageing for all.

Objectives

This side event, organized by UN DESA and UN ESCWA in partnership with the Global Coalition on Aging (GCoA), aims to foster dialogue among experts, policymakers, and advocates. It will provide a platform to explore the primary challenges and ongoing gaps in ensuring healthy ageing for all in an increasingly ageing world. Participants will share experiences, explore opportunities, and discuss practical, sustainable solutions to enhance healthcare access, economic security, social inclusion, and supportive environments for older persons. The discussion will contribute to advancing global efforts toward an age-inclusive society, ensuring that ageing remains a central priority in sustainable development and human rights agendas.

The event is sponsored by the Permanent Missions of Canada and Spain to the United Nations in partnership with Spain's Instituto de Mayores y Servicios Sociales (IMERSO), UN ECLAC, UNFPA, WHO, Standing Working Group on Ageing (SWGA), and the International Longevity Centre in Canada (ILC Canada). It aligns with the thematic focus of the 58th session of the Commission on Population and Development *Ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages* by addressing the urgent need for inclusive policies and frameworks that support healthy ageing.

Participants

The side event will target representatives of Member States, Permanent Missions to the United Nations, experts, civil society organizations, United Nations entities and other relevant stakeholders.

Expected Outcomes

This side event aims to:

1. **Increase awareness** of the multifaceted challenges and opportunities in ensuring healthy ageing for all, emphasizing the life-course approach to physical, mental, and social well-being.
2. **Discuss recommendations** for strengthening policies and practices that promote equitable access to healthcare, social inclusion, and economic security for older persons, while addressing gaps and barriers such as ageism, digital exclusion, and financial insecurity.
3. **Contribute to the broader agenda** of the implementation of existing global frameworks on healthy ageing

Meeting format and tentative agenda

The side event will consist of opening, plenary presentations, moderated discussion, and a closing segment.

13:15 *Welcome remarks*

Amal Abou Rafeh, Chief of the Programme on Ageing Section, UN DESA

Mike Hodin, CEO of the Global Coalition on Aging

13:20 *Opening remarks*

Michael Gort, Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations

Ana Jiménez de la Hoz, Deputy Permanent Representative of Spain to the United Nations

13:30 *Moderator*

Robin Fenley Vice-Chair of NGO Committee on Ageing

Panel members

Manuel Veguín Garcia Counsellor of International Relations in IMSERSO, Institute of Older Persons and Social Services (IMSERSO), Spain and member of the Standing Working Group on Ageing

John Beard Irene Diamond Professor of Productive Ageing, CUMC

Margaret Gillis Founding President, International Longevity Centre, Canada

Simone Cecchini Chief of the Latin American and Caribbean Demographic Centre (CELADE) and the Population Division, ECLAC

14:05 *Interactive dialogue*

14:25 *Closing remarks*

Alessio Cangiano Chief Population and Development Branch, UNFPA